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Message Text

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SWEL, ET
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIAITION PRESIDENT ATTACKS CRITICS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 11227

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT OF ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HAS RESPONDED IN DETAIL TO PRESS ATTACKS AGAINST "EXPLOITATIVE" PRACTICES OF MEDICAL PROFESSION. COVERAGE HIS REMARKS IN BOTH ETHIOPIAN HERALD AND ADDIS ZEMEN INDICATES EPMG PROBABLY HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ON HEALTH COMMITTEE PROPOSALS TO SOCIALIZE MEDICAL SERVICES REPORTED REFTEL.

1. IN NOVEMBER 30 ETHIOPIAN HERALD, DR. ASSEFA GEBRE SELASSIE, PRESIDENT ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, RESPONDED TO PRESS ALLEGATIONS THAT DOCTORS EXPLOITING MASSES AND TO PRESS CALLS THAT PRIVATE CLINICS BE NATIONALIZED. DR. ASSEFA STATES PRESS STATEMENTS FAR FROM REALITY,AND THAT ONLY ONE OF TOTAL OF 120 ETHIOPIAN DOCTORS ENGAGED FULL TIME IN PRIVATE PRACTICE. HE STATED HE AND OTHER MEMBERS MEDICAL PROFESSION "AMAZED TO READ ALLEGATION THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER DOCTORS HAD ESTABLISHED THEIR OWN CLINICS AND WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN BUSINESS ACTIVITIES ADVERSELY AFFECTING HEALTH SERVICES IN EXISTING HOSPITALS".

2. DR. ASSEFA POINTED OUT THAT ONLY FIVE DOCTORS IN ADDIS AND FIVE IN PROVINCES PRACTICE IN PRIVATE CLINICS IN ADDITION TO THEIR REGULAR HOSPITAL WORK: AND THAT NON EVIDENCE EXISTED THAT PRESS ALLEGATIONS WERE TRUE. IF SO, MEDICAL
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ASSOCITION WOULD NOT HESTITATE CONDEMN TRANSGRESSORS.

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3. DR. ASSEFA ALSO COUNTERED ALLEGATIONS THAT BECAUSE OF THEIR VESTED INTERESTS IN PRIVATE CLINICS, ETHIOPIAN DOCTORS HAMPERING SPREAD OF MEDICAL SERVICES TO RURAL AREAS. HE CLAIMED ETHIOPIAN DOCTORS RESPONDING WHOLEHEARTEDLY TO CALL OF REVOTUTION. IN CLOSING REMARKS, DR. ASSEFA DENOUNCED IN STRONGEST TERMS ASPERSIONS AGAINST ETHIOPIAN DOCTORS AND CHARGED THESE DELIBERATELY DESIGNED TO ERODE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN MEDICAL PROFESSION. HE SUGGESTED SUCH ASSCUSATIONS WOULD DISCOURAGE RETURN OF ETHIOPIAN DOCTROS FROM ABROAD AND THAT ATTACKS ON MEDICAL PROFESSION COULD BE REGARDED AS ACTS OF SABOTAGE DESIGNED TO UNDERMINE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES.

4. COMMENT: DR. ASSEFA HAS OVERSTATED DILIGENCE AND REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL OF ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL PROFESSION. MAJORITY OF ETHIOPIAN DOCTORS DO PRACTICE IN ADDIS, BUT SIMPLE FACT IS THAT 120 ETHIOPIAN DOCTORS CANNOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE MEDICAL SERVICES TO 28 MILLION PEOPLE.
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